

“What kind of City do we want?” By Jeff Dredge July 23, 2008

The past fiscal year has been a productive one for our City, even in the face of a leveling economy. In general Utah's economy has fared better than the national economy. In Murray, gross revenue from sales tax (our greatest source of revenue) has been generally flat as compared to last year. However, recognizing that the National economic problems will eventually work their way down to the municipal level during this years budget process both the Mayor and his staff, as well as the City Council, took a very conservative approach in our revenue estimates and have attempted to aggressively keep costs under control.

As we often face significant budget restraints, either imposed by the economy or by legislation enacted at the Federal and State levels, we are always forced to make difficult decisions that sometimes have a very short-term impact on the city versus those that will determine the economic viability of the city for our grandchildren. Through this thoughtful evaluation process regarding our local budget, we are constantly asking ourselves, “What kind of City do we want to be?” And, are we exercising the type of forward looking wisdom that our predecessors did when they invested in the Murray Power Department or our water system. As Murray is in the center of the valley and inevitably feeling growing pains as the whole valley swells with new residents, it is easy to identify the local impacts from recent growth spurts – the opening of the Intermountain Medical Center, the Fireclay development, and many others. As these and other factors compel us to look toward the future, of key importance are the questions of “what type of city do we want to be in the future” and “what steps are we going to take to ensure that we manage/control the attainment of that”. Our progenitors did a pretty fine job. It is our intent to continue on with that tradition.

Currently, we are working through the budgeting process for fiscal year 2009. We have allocated resources to be used to help retain our employee base. We feel it is not only important to field great employees, but to retain their institutional knowledge once they have been trained and have worked in the field. Murray has a dedicated workforce, and we are ever appreciative of their tireless service.

We have also made it a priority to sure-up many of the poor and failing roads in Council Districts Four and Five. Many roads in these areas are badly in need of repair. And as fuel costs rise (which directly impacts the cost of road construction) it is prudent to complete these projects sooner than later – working to get the best value for our dollar.

Finally, in an effort to seize our future we have set aside resources to review our land use ordinances in our historic downtown district. It is our intent to create a Master Plan for this area and hopefully encourage redevelopment of this part of our city. This area has great potential and we are investing in a plan that will attempt to consider the best and highest use for the area (with the input of all stakeholders, of course) and then put into place a plan that will, over time, allow for significant improvement.

We feel it is important to maintain the vitality of our City and ever improve our movement toward the future. If we want municipal services that are top-notch and our quality of life to be preserved in a sustainable way, it hinges on the decisions we make today. The budget process is always labor intensive, and we wish to thank the Mayor's Office, the Finance Director, Pat Wilson, and all the Murray City Department Heads for the enormous effort to provide pertinent information that support decisions that will impact tomorrow.